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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05 CCO-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 SP-02 OC-05 OPR-02 PA-01 USSS-00

PRS-01 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SS-15 SY-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9483

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0386

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, INT, BG

SUBJ: STUDENT UNREST AT DACCA UNIVERSITY

1. THE QUIET WHICH HAD COME TO CHARACTERIZE DACCA'S UNIVERSITIES WAS LOST LAST WEEK WHEN STUDENT GROUPS CLASHED. IN CONSEQUENCE, THE POLICE, BACKED BY THE ARMY, CORDONED OFF THE CAMPUS, SEARCHED THE RESIDENCE HALLS, EXPELLED MORE THAN 800 NON-STUDENTS FROM VARIOUS HOSTELS, AND DETAINED 54 PERSONS FOR POSSESSING "SUBVERSIVE AND ANTI-STATE PROPAGANDA MATERIALS, EXPLOSIVES AND HAND GRENADES." IN THEIR ZEAL, HOWEVER, THE POLICE SWEEPED UP AND MANHANDLED SOME BONA FIDE STUDENTS AND UPSET THE FACULTY WITH THEIR HEAVY HANDEDNESS. DESPITE AN APOLOGY OF SORTS FROM GENERAL ZIA, THE GENERAL UNHAPPINESS AT THE UNIVERSITY IS SUCH THAT THERE IS AT LEAST TACIT SUPPORT FOR THE SMALL PROCESSIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS THAT ARE CONTINUING THIS WEEK.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE CLASHES WHICH INVOLVED ONE HUNDRED OR SO YOUTHS ARMED WITH HOCKEY STICKS, EIGHT OR
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TEN OF WHOM WERE HURT, TOOK PLACE BETWEEN MEMBERS

OF (A) THE SMALL GROUP ASSOCIATED WITH OLI AHAD'S JATIYO LEAGUE AND (B) THE BIPLOBI CHATTRA DAL (REVOLUTIONARY STUDENT GROUP). THE BIPLOBI WAS ONCE AFFILIATED WITH NAP/BHASHANI BUT HAS LATELY BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH ELEMENTS OF NAP/MUSAFFAR AND THE JSD. THE TROUBLE BEGAN AT DACCA COLLEGE (A QUARTER MILE FROM THE UNIVERSITY) ON JANUARY 13 AND SPREAD TO THE UNIVERSITY ITSELF THE NEXT DAY, LEADING THE POLICE TO CORDON OFF THE UNIVERSITY AREA AND BEGIN ITS SEARCHES THE NIGHT OF JANUARY 14/15. WE ARE TOLD FROM A POLICE SOURCE THAT THE POLICE CARTED OFF IN TRUCKS THE ILLEGAL RESIDENTS FROM HOSTELS AT DACCA UNIVERSITY, THE ENGINEERING UNIVERSITY AND THE MEDICAL COLLEGE, BUT RELEASED MOST "AFTER A FEW HIP-PINGS." ABOUT 50 PERSONS WERE ARRESTED AND DETAINED. THE POLICE VACATED THE CAMPUSES BUT HAVE LEFT PICKETS IN STRATEGIC SPOTS SURROUNDING THE UNIVERSITY AREA.

3. THE VIGOR OF THE MLA'S RESPONSE TO THE JANUARY 14 CLASH HAS CAUSED DISMAY AT THE UNIVERSITY, AND LED TO A WELL-PUBLICIZED MEETING BETWEEN GENERAL ZIA AND THE VICE CHANCELLOR ON JANUARY 19. GENERAL ZIA, IN A SEEMING EFFORT TO RETRIEVE THE SITUATION, IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE "PRESERVATION OF THE SANCTITY OF THE UNIVERSITY" AND THAT HE "FELT SINCERELY SORRY" TO LEARN THAT BONA FIDE STUDENTS HAD BEEN INCONVENIENCED BY THE ACTIONS OF THE POLICE. ZIA, HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED THAT UNFORTUNATELY THE SANCTITY OF THE UNIVERSITY HAD BEEN VIOLATED BY THE ILLEGAL RESIDENTS AND BY PERSONS WANTED ON SPECIFIC CRIMINAL CHARGES: THUS NECESSITATING THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE LAW ENFORCING AGENCIES. THE ZIA MAY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT MORE THAN WORDS WERE REQUIRED WAS SUGGESTED BY THE NEWS REPORTS THAT THE GENERAL HAD APPROVED FUNDS TO IMPROVE SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AT THE UNIVERSITY AND TO MEET THE PAYMENT OF ARREARS OF SCHOLARSHIPS TO STUDENTS. COINCIDENTALLY, THE SAME DAY THE VICE CHANCELLOR ANNOUNCED THAT CONSTRUCTION OF FOUR MORE RESIDENCE HALLS WOULD BEGIN SOON.

4. THE POLICE ACTION AND GENERAL ZIA'S STATEMENTS HAVE
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NOT QUELLED UNREST ON THE CAMPUS. PROCESSION CONTINUE, THE FACULTY IS RELUCTANT TO VENTURE ON CAMPUS, AND CLASSES ARE DIFFICULT TO HOLD. CONFUSION OVER THE IDENTITY AND MOTIVES OF THE PROTESTORS CONTINUE ALTHOUGH MANY FACULTY MEMBER HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE JSD FACTION SEEMS PREDOMINANT AT PRESENT. THIS CONCLUSION IS LARGELY BASED ON THE FACT THAT LEAFLETS AND GRAFFITI IN CIRCULATION CONTAIN THE STANDARD JSD DEMAND THAT THE INDIANS,

SOVIETS AND AMERICAN GET OUT OF BANGLADESH. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT PRO-SOVIET, PRO-INDIAN NAP/MUZAFFAR STUDENTS, PREPARED TO FOMENT TROUBLE UNDER ANY GUISE, ARE AS ACTIVE AS THE JSD. WHAT IS OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST IS THE FACT THAT SO FAR THIS WEEK THERE APPEARS TO BE NO ONE WILLING TO LEAD PRO-GOVERNMENT COUNTER-PROTESTS. RATHER, BECAUSE OF THE "EXCESSES" OF THE POLICE, THERE SEEMS TO BE SUPPORT, HOWEVER TEMPORARY, ON CAMPUS FOR THE PROTESTORS.

5. COMMENT. THE UNIVERSITY IS A LIKELY LABORATORY TO TEST THE METTLE OF THE MLA. FAILURE TO RESPOND TO STUDENT AGITATORS WILL SIMPLY EMBOLDEN THE OPPOSITION. ON THE OTHER HAND, AS IN THIS CASE, ANY RESPONSE TO STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND UNREST IS MORE LIKELY THAN NOT TO INVOLVE STUDENTS WHO ARE, ESSENTIALLY, INNOCENT BYSTANDERS. WHEN THEY ARE ARRESTED OR ROUGHED UP, IT IS URE TO INSTILL ANIMOSITY TOWARD THE AUTHORITIES AND CREATE A COMMON, IF TRANSITTORY, SENSE OF IDENTITY WITH THE DEMONSTRATORS. THIS IS THE DILEMMA THAT GENERAL ZIA NOW FACES.
BOSTER

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